

# Origin of the Violin and the Fiddle-Bow

Opportunities for Study in the Metropolitan Art Museum—Object Lessons in Musical Evolution—Primitive Forms of Bowed Instruments.

By H. E. KREHBIEL.

THE convention of women's clubs brought together many women of many minds and multitudinous interests. Among these the representatives of musical clubs were neither the least numerous nor the least zealous in the pursuit of their aims. It is doubtful if any of the organizations of women throughout the country, the political ones not excepted, have done as much as the musical clubs to advance their aims. Throughout the great West, beginning indeed with a broad territory east of the Mississippi River, they have not only been the active agents in stimulating local study and practice in music, but have also been the mainstay of itinerant concert-givers. In nearly all the cities and towns visited by pianists, violinists and singers the arrangements for their public performances have been made through agents here (a considerable number of them women) and the local clubs. Some of the zeal and energy of these clubs has no doubt been frittered away in the pursuit of inconsequential things and ill-directed effort, as is shown by their programmes and indicated by the letters asking for help and direction received by artists and critics in the larger centres, especially New York and Boston; but much of the work has been well applied, and has made for the good of the art generally as well as locally.

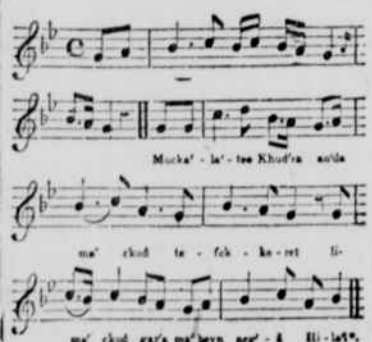
It is a pity that the convention of the Federated Clubs could not have been held in New York when the city's musical activities were at their height. The opportunities to learn which our opera house and concert rooms would have offered in a week would have been more profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in artistic righteousness than all the talk which they could listen to in a month. Whether or not the attention of the musical delegates was directed to the Crosby Brown collection of musical instruments housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art we do not know. If not, those who failed to see the collection because they were not advised to do so missed an opportunity for study second only in importance to the concerts and operas which could not be offered them. The collection is not only large; it is extremely comprehensive in its illustration of the principles involved in the construction of musical instruments and of their historical development. It is also admirably arranged and intelligently catalogued, the special introduction to the keyboard stringed instruments by Mr. A. J. Hopkins being an excellent preparation for a view of one of the treasures of the collection—one of the first pianofortes made by Cristofori, the Italian inventor of the instrument.

How instruction of a most entertaining character can be extracted from the Crosby Brown collection may be suggested by some comments on the primitive bowed instruments which were the prototypes of the king of all music-makers, the violin. The exposition may be helped out by means of the pictures on this page. The feature of the violin which differentiates it from all musical instruments save those of its own tribe, is the bow, by means of which the strings are set into vibration. It has long puzzled musical students that none of the monuments of antiquity, neither mural paintings, nor sculptures, nor vase-designs, shows a representation of the fiddle-bow. If such negative evidence is conclusive, then neither Assyrians nor Hebrews, neither Egyptians nor Greeks nor Romans knew anything about the principle of the bow. Nero didn't fiddle when Rome burned, for Nero never saw a fiddle. If he played anything it was the lyre, the water-organ or the bagpipe—for they were the instruments with which he was familiar. So far as the Hebrews are concerned, Whistler has troubled youthful investigators a little by piling up fiddle bows as well as trumpets by the thousand in the temple at Jerusalem in his translation of Josephus' history; but this is only a blunder due to Whistler's plentiful lack of musical knowledge. The word which he translated bow was *plektron*, and a *plektron* was a plectrum, a bit of wood or metal with which musical strings were plucked or picked, not rubbed.

The invention of the violin bow, and therefore of the violin, is claimed by the Hindus, who say that a rude instrument called *ravanastrom* (still to be found occasionally in the hands of mendicant monks) was invented in their land not less than 6,000 years ago. The simplest form of a bowed instrument shown in the *ravanastrom* is also to be found in the Chinese *ur-hien* or "two-string," which may yet be seen in the orchestras of the Chinese theatres. This, it is said, was introduced into China by the Buddhist monks; but if the principle of tone production exemplified in the fiddle-bow was known in India 6,000 years ago it is passing strange that so artistic a people as the Greeks never assimilated it.

Nevertheless it is very likely that in the *ravanastrom* and *ur-hien* have the earliest form of the violin. This fiddle is a small cylinder of wood, one end of which is covered with a tightly drawn bit of snakeskin on which rests a tiny bridge. A round stick is thrust through the middle of the cylinder. It terminates in a head holding pegs for tuning the two strings of waxed silk (in China) or gut (in India). There is no finger-board like that of the violin or instruments of the guitar tribe, but the strings are stopped for the production of tones of different pitch by a simple pressure against them. This is also the case with the *ravadaung* which the young lady from Siam is playing in our photograph. The strings are set into vibration by a very primitive bow, which is merely a piece of bamboo bent by a tuft of horsehair held by a knot at each end. The horsehair, rubbed with resin, moves between the two strings, both of which are sounded when the bow is drawn back or forth.

First cousin to the *ravanastrom* and *ur-hien* is the *kemangch*, whose original home was Persia, but which is common now in Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and other Oriental countries. Never mind its names; wherever you turn to in the East you will find it with its body, or resonator, of coconut shell, its belly, or soundboard, of fish skin,



## COLERIDGE-TAYLOR AND THE NORFOLK FESTIVALS

The fact that the annual music festival of the Litchfield County Choral Union is to be held in Norfolk, Conn., this week gives timely interest to the story of one of the compositions written for these festivals. It has been remarked heretofore in connection with these annual occurrences that their plan contemplates the engagement of a composer, either native or foreign, to write a work of large dimensions, which is produced under his direction, for which he is remunerated, but which remains his property. Coleridge-Taylor had visited the United States in 1904 on the invitation of the Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society of Washington. He came again in 1906, and on this visit went on a concert tour with Mr. Harry F. Burleigh and received an invitation from Mr. Carl Stoeckel to give a concert in Norfolk. In October, 1909, Mr. Stoeckel, being in London, invited him to conduct his "Hiawatha" music at the Norfolk festival of 1910, and it was on this visit that he conceived the plan of composing his violin concerto. In a biography of the composer, written by W. C. Berwick Sayers and published in London a few months ago, the origin of the concerto is told in the words of Mr. Stoeckel. Mr. Taylor had written his "Bamboula" for the festival, an orchestral work for which

Mr. Krehbiel had supplied him with the theme. "After supper," says Mr. Stoeckel in a letter to the biographer, "my wife went into the library and Coleridge-Taylor and I went into another room to have a smoke. She began playing on the piano, and suddenly Coleridge-Taylor dropped his cigarette, jumped to his feet and said, 'What is that lovely melody?' It was an African slave song called 'Keep Me from Sinking Down, Good Lord,' which has never been in the books, as it was taken from the lips of a slave directly after the war by a teacher who went South and who gave it to my late father-in-law, Robbins Battell. Coleridge-Taylor went into the library and asked my wife to play it again, which she did, singing the melody at the same time. He then said: 'Do let me take it down. I will use it sometime.'"

"For several days some of the 'Bamboula' rhapsody had been running in my head, and the thought came to me that perhaps Coleridge-Taylor might be induced to write a violin concerto, using this African melody in the adagio movements. I proposed the matter to him then and there. He said that he was delighted with the idea and would undertake it. He was, of course, to take his own time and to receive an honorarium therefor. In due season the manuscript of the violin concerto reached me. I took it at once to Mrs. Maud Powell, as the work was dedicated to her and she was to give the first rendition. My original suggestion to Coleridge-Taylor was that the concerto should be founded on three African melodies characteristic of our so-called Southern negro airs. When we went over the concerto we found that the second movement was based on an African melody, but not on 'Keep Me from Sinking Down,' which Coleridge-Taylor had found that he could not use, and he had substituted 'Many Thousands Gone' for this movement. The third movement he has used 'Yankee Doodle' quite frequently, which, of course, is not strictly an African melody. We agreed that the second movement was a beautiful piece of music, but both the first and third movements seemed to us rather sketchy and unsatisfactory.

"While I was considering what to write about this work to Coleridge-Taylor I received a letter from him requesting me to throw it into the fire and saying that he had written an entirely new and original work, all the melodies being his own, and that it was a hundred times better than his first composition. I returned the first composition to him at once, as it seemed a pity to lose the second movement; and a few weeks later the score of the second concerto arrived. It was tried and found highly satisfactory. Its first rendition was at the Norfolk festival of 1912, being played by Mrs. M. M. Powell, under the direction of Arthur Mees. After the first concerto arrived, which we did not use and which did not contain the air 'Keep



A Siamese maiden playing the Saw-duang.

An Alatee playing the Rebab.

## MUSIC NOTES.

Carl Friedberg, the pianist, will make his third American concert tour next season, and is already booked with most of the symphony orchestras and many clubs in the East and West. Mr. Friedberg will play three times in Boston next season, one appearance with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He will also play a return engagement with the Cincinnati orchestra, with which he made his first orchestra appearance in America.

Hermann Weil, the German barytone of the Metropolitan Opera House, who is reengaged for his sixth American Metropolitan season, will for the first time since he has been in this country be able to accept concert engagements. He will be with the Metropolitan until March and will devote March and April to concert work.

Union Hill is to be the scene next month of a series of concerts, under the auspices of the International Music Festival League, Inc. The concerts will be held on three successive evenings, the first being devoted to German compositions, under the leadership of William Loeffenberg; the second to Italian music, with E. A. Beasley directing and the third night will be American night, given over entirely to domestic songs, sung and played by the combined choruses and orchestras of the German and Italian nights. This patriotic performance will be under the leadership of Dr. Archer Leslie Hood, one of the incorporators of the International Music Festival League.

The Union Hill concerts are one of a number of similar performances that are to be given under the inspiration of the International Music Festival League throughout the country, to culminate with a week of international music in this city, at which it is expected, according to the league, that at least 40,000 voices will be heard. The league states that its efforts have a threefold object, to promote the love of music in general, to foster community singing in particular, and to use music as a means of welding together the various national elements that constitute the American people.

When Pasquale Amato, the Metropolitan Opera House barytone, appears at the Carl Stoeckel Music Festival at Norfolk, Conn., next Wednesday, June 7, he will sing two of his best known arias, from "Pagliacci" and from the "Barber of Seville."

Pasquale Amato, who heads the Music League Committee on Park Music, announces that the first free park concert arranged in cooperation with the Park Department, will take place in Central Park Mall on Monday evening, June 12.

To-morrow evening in the Yale Bowl Madame Melanie Kurt and Johannes Sembach will sing the principal roles in the open-air production of Wagner's "The Valkyrie" to be given there by the Metropolitan Opera House forces. Madame Kurt will take the part of Sieglinde in which she has appeared at the Leipzig Royal Opera,

## Gatti-Casazza, Humanist, Talks on Modern Opera

To Fill Out Our Repertory, He Says, We Must Borrow from Operas of the Past—and There Lies the Difficulty.

**G**ULIO GATTI-CASAZZA is something more than a mere operatic impresario; he is a student of men, women and affairs, of history, of politics, and of a hundred and one other things of which those who control our operatic and dramatic destinies are supposed to have little knowledge. In short Signor Gatti-Casazza is a humanist. Those who know him would never call him an optimistic humanist, but neither would they call him a pessimistic one. Some who have known him but slightly have averred that he is a cynic, but it is to be feared that these persons belong to the category of incorrigible sentimentalists, a category, alas, only too numerous in this prosperous land of ours, a category that refuses to open its eyes for fear of seeing something which might disturb its complacency, or its ears for fear of hearing sounds which are not produced by the angels. Signor Gatti-Casazza does not, indeed, belong to this precious band, his eyes and ears are very much opened, and the men and women he knows are of flesh and blood, compounded equally of virtue and frailty. While believing in ideals, he realizes that the perfect approach to any ideal is but a dream; that at best we can but approximate—Signor Gatti is one of William James's Pragmatists, and in this fact lies his success.

So it is that when he speaks of opera, its changes, its present and past conditions, its artists, its future, we may be sure that what he will utter will have a foundation four square upon the facts of this earth. He is no Icarus who will scorch his wings at the sun. He will keep upon the earth and speak with the tongues of men. Whereupon your sentimentalists no doubt will become grievously offended, finding that the general manager of our greatest operatic institution refuses to attempt aerial flights from the springboard of illusion.

"Operatic art changes with the times," said Signor Gatti recently to a Tribune representative. "Each age possesses its type of opera, and for that type are trained the artists. The opera of to-day is typified in Italy by Puccini, Mascagni and Leoncavallo; in France, by Massenet; in Germany there is Wagner and his school, and luckily Mozart. Now modern opera is comparatively easy to sing. No long training in bel canto is required for a successful debut in Puccini or Mascagni. The consequence is that a singer no longer will work seven or eight or nine years to perfect herself in the art of song. She will work two years and make a debut in a modern opera. She will succeed and soon will enter the ranks of the stars. When, however, she is called upon to sing in an old opera the result is usually lamentable. Rossini, Bellini, or the earlier Verdi require singers trained in the old school, and in that training two years' study is but a preliminary lesson."

"Now, a peculiarly unfortunate condition thus arises for an opera house to-day. The old composers would turn out one, two or even three works a year, with the consequence that the mass of available operas was tremendous, operas all composed in the style of the time. But our modern composers have no such facility. It is often that one opera in five or six or even more years is what they accomplish. The result is that of operas in the modern school there are not enough, or nearly enough, to form a repertory. This, of course, means that we must fall back on the old works, and so we have a condition where there are artists exceedingly capable in one portion of the repertory, but far less capable in

older operas, which, none the less, they must sing.

"Now, fifty years ago the opera houses had the advantage not only of possessing a far larger number of works of the time, but singers all of whom were grounded in the art of song, and who, therefore, could sing with facility in any school. Indeed, when Wagner appeared they easily turned to his works and outdid those who may sing them to-day and who have not been thus grounded. Even in the operas of Puccini and Leoncavallo, the singers who are most successful are those of the old tradition. Mr. Caruso is an excellent example of this. Though the greatest tenor in modern Italian opera, he was trained for the works of bel canto. If singers would only realize that though they may succeed in the modern operas with only two years' study their success would be far greater with six years of preparation, then we might hope for better singing to-day. But the commercial appeal in a commercial age is difficult, indeed, to resist—indeed, almost impossible.

"I am thus firmly convinced that the basis for the proper presentation of all opera is a knowledge of the art of song, and until such a knowledge returns the old works can receive no such presentations as in former days.

"To-day the ensemble of productions and the average of acting is, however, undoubtedly higher than it was formerly. But there are few such great personalities. When we remember that performances of 'Les Huguenots' at the Metropolitan, once contained such names as Victor Maurel, Lilli Lehmann, Jean and Edouard de Reszke, Nordica and Plançon all on one bill, we may well rub our eyes! It is to my mind unquestioned that this democratic, scientific age has weakened the power of the imagination in both creative and interpretive artists. What we have gained in organization we have lost in individual fervor and spiritual insight. But in this the opera is not alone—the same state of affairs exists in the theatre, where great acting is becoming rarer and rarer.

"This condition is not peculiar to America—it is equally true of Europe. The operas that are popular here are the ones that are popular in all other countries, and the same in less measure is true of the singers. The world, indeed, is becoming more and more of a unit.

"To my mind the basis of a popular operatic art must always be melody. This is the reason that the old works, when well sung, are always popular. It is indeed the reason why Wagner is popular, and it certainly accounts for the vogue of Puccini and Massenet. I realize that works like Debussy's 'Pelléas et Melisande' are masterpieces, but popular appeal will always be small. Of young composers, Italy has Zandonai and Montemezzi, the former, to me perhaps more truly original than the latter, whose music has a Wagnerian tinge. In France there are Dukas and Ravel. 'Ariane et Barbe Bleue' is the creation of a master, but it failed because of its undramatic libretto; Ravel's 'L'Heure Espagnole' I bought to produce at the New Theatre, but unfortunately the Metropolitan is altogether too big for its presentation. Yet, it is undeniable that the modern list is far from copious, and to fill out our repertory we must borrow from the operas of the past. Thus, we are at a double disadvantage—the paucity of modern works makes necessary the inclusion of works written for artists trained in bel canto, while at the same time there are to-day very few such artists."

## Borodin and His Cats

Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Les Années," in a translation by Edward Biddle, are appearing in "The New Music Review," published in this city. The last chapter is devoted to the impositions practised by his friends, pupils or poor relatives on Borodin, the composer of "Prince Igor"; the novelty of the last Metropolitan season. Also to the slipshod housekeeping of Borodin's wife. Concerning the latter, Rimsky-Korsakoff has this to say:

"It is to be observed also that his wife, Catherine Sergueievna, suffered continually from asthma, did not sleep through the night, and only arose at midday. Borodin cared for her at night, arose early, and thus did not procure a due proportion of sleep. The entire domestic life of the couple was full of disorder; no fixed hour for dinner and other meals. Arriving one night after 10 o'clock, I found them about to sit down to dinner. Without taking any care for them, the young children that they adopted subsequently brought up, their lodgings continually served as an asylum for numerous relatives, poor or on their way somewhere, who fell ill and even lost their reason. Borodin cared for them, established them in hospitals and visited them. The four rooms composing his apartment were often occupied by several of these visitors, some sleeping on the divans and others even on the floor. It often happened that the master of the lodgings could not even touch the piano, as some one was sleeping in the adjoining room. The same disorder prevailed at table: several cats, which Borodin harbored would get upon the table, put their noses in the plates, or jump upon the backs of the guests. These felines luxuriated in the protection of Catherine Sergueievna. The biographies would be recounted. One was called 'Fisherman,' because he succeeded perfectly in catching small fish through holes in the ice of the frozen rivers. Another, named 'Lelong,' had a habit of seizing other cats and bringing them to the Borodins, who housed them. More than once it has happened to me to dine with them and to see one of these cats heated at pitilessly. 'Come, sir, this is too much this time,' Borodin would say. But the cat never stirred and stretched itself comfortably on his neck."



The Kemangch.

Me from Sinking Down,' I wrote to Coleridge-Taylor and suggested that he should make a separate arrangement of this air either for violin or cello. He responded with promptness and sent along with the second concerto an arrangement of the air for violin and orchestra. This was played as an encore by Mme. Powell at the time of the rendition of the concerto."

## Verdi's Requiem at the Polo Grounds.

The Polo Grounds this afternoon will be the scene of an open air presentation of Verdi's "Requiem Mass." To gain greater intimacy between audience and performers the huge stage necessary to accommodate the vast ensemble has been so constructed as to form a continuation of the shorter wing of Brush stadium, which extends into the centerfield and virtually closes the gap between the two flanges. A monster sounding board has been placed back of the stage, upon which the chorus is placed in tiers, and a marquee overhead to aid in projecting the sound.

The sacrifice of the bleachers to insure a more effective presentation of the Verdi mass entails the abandonment of 12,000 seats. The "bleacherite" admission fee, however, has not been suspended for that reason. Those who, in watching the Giants circle the bases, had paid 50 cents for the privilege, may enjoy the "Requiem" this afternoon at no increase of cost. Six thousand seats at the old bleacher price of 50 cents are to be had in the grandstand. In case of "overflow" crowds, a section of the bleachers, directly abutting on the south wing of the stadium, will be thrown open.

The performance of the Manzoni "Requiem" will consume about two hours. Louis Koemanich will direct the performance. Lucille Laurence, Giovanni Zenatello, Maria Gay and Leon Rothier are the solo artists.